

## **Social context: Social relations – gender and other dimensions**

*Dr. Md. Akhtar Hossain, Professor, Dept. of Fisheries, RU*

### **Concept**

- Gender and other dimensions of the social context , for example, class, beliefs, ethnicity, and rituals can affect household livelihoods
- In SL approach social context influences HH livelihoods by affecting access to livelihood assets and livelihood strategies

### **Sex and Gender**

#### *Sex*

Different biological and physiological characteristics of males and females, such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones, etc.; normally can not be changed; Aspect of Biology

#### *Gender*

Socially constructed differences between men and women such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed.

- Gender can lead to poverty in two important ways:
- Female headed households are poorer
- Within households, women have less access to income, household resources than men, therefore:
- As a result, women often have inferior livelihood outcomes (nutrition, health, income, etc.)

### **Equity and equality**

- Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities
- Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome
- *Equity is a solution for addressing imbalanced social systems*
- Example of equality: A community meeting, where all members of the community are invited, about a local environmental health concern is held in English though English is not the primary language for 25% of the residents
- Example of equity: The community leaders hire translators to attend the meeting or offer an additional meeting held in another language.

## **Women's roles in livelihood strategies**

### *On-farm activities*

- PL collection from the wild stock
- Collection of snails
- Homestead gardening
- Handicrafts
- Small holders fish farm management
- Poultry and livestock farming

### *On-farm activities*

- Garments
- Maintenance of road
- Maintenance of road
- Selling
- Hand-made paper
- Frozen industry ( fish, frog, shrimp and prawn processing plant)

## **Empowerment, development and equity**

### *Empowerment*

Is a process to enhance the ability of poor to participate in decision making, participation and capacity building on their strength from HH to national and international level

### *Women empowerment*

Refers to decision making in the family, involvement in local dispute mitigation activities (Shalish), factions, local government (Union Parishad) and within the family relating to production, expenditure, having children, selection of husband and marriage giving of the daughter

## **Approaches for women empowerment and development**

### WID, WAD and GAD

- Women participations are essential for development
- Need to promote women's development and equity so that their livelihoods are improved
- Gender equality doesn't mean equal numbers of men and women or boys and girls in all activities, nor does it necessarily mean treating men and women or boys and girls exactly the same
- Gender signifies an aspiration to work towards a society in which neither women nor men suffer from poverty
- Women and men are able to live equally fulfilling lives
- Needs recognition that men and women often have different needs and priorities, face different constraints, have different aspirations and contribute to development in different ways
- Recognizing the right of women to define the objectives of development for themselves

## **Constraints for women's participation, empowerment, development and equity**

- Problems of patriarchy
- Lack of access to education
- Domestic responsibilities restrict opportunities to earn income
- Lack of access to training
- Religious restrictions
- Lack of awareness about women's rights
- Women entrepreneurship/empowerment is not encouraged
- Lack of access to credit
- Early marriage, divorce and dowry
- Physiological weakness
- Cruelty and oppression to woman
- Women's contractual inferiority in the labour market
- Women property inheritance limitations
- Privileged male access to the existing resource of agricultural sector
- Limited access to market
- Lack of management support

## **Empowerment of women in Bangladesh**

- Muslim women do not any role in Mosque management unlike Hindus as they have some role in up keeping temples and Puja
- Women do not play any role in the local institutions, for example, Bazar committee, cultural organizations and CBOs
- Women doing well as NGO group members in taking out loans and returning it
- In most cases, loans taken by the women are controlled and used by the males
- In Bangladesh a study in 1997 found that major HH decisions are taken by the HH head and wife together headed by the men in 49% cases, while in 38% cases such decisions are taken by all adult HH members and only in 13 % cases by the HH head alone. On the other hand, in 1977 about 75% decisions were taken by the HH head alone (Siddiqui, 2000). This is a good example of improvement in women empowerment

## **Class**

### *Class*

Group of peoples who share similar economic status

### *Basis of class*

- Land ownership-

- labor exploitation-based on the exploitation of labor by the land owner
- economic behavior-
  - rent in
  - rent out
  - share in
  - share out
  - Loan in (% of total farm value)
  - Loan out (% of total farm value)
- Level of education
- Asset holding etc.

### **How class affects livelihoods:**

Poor households have more severe restrictions on access to natural, physical, human, social, and financial capital, on the basis of their class position

- poor people may not have access to some good health institutions
- poor may not have access to some good educational institutions
- poor may not have access to credit from either formal or informal sources
- poor may have problems getting their children married

### **Belief**

#### *Belief*

- A set of ideas shared by a group which is either untested or untestable
- Traditional belief originated from religion , ethnicity and superstition

### **How belief may affect livelihoods:**

- Prevents females from small scale agricultural farming, for example, females are not allowed to enter into vegetables and spices farms (onion, garlic) etc.
- Prevents females from selling their labor in the fish, shrimp and prawn hatchery
- One ethnic group is not allowed to work in another ethnic working area (example, Khasias do not allow Bengali to work in the betal leaf farms)
- Females are strongly restricted to work in the livestock farms (Comilla and Noakhali)

### **Ethnicity**

Ethnicity is a shared (perceived or actual) racial, linguistic, or national identity of a social group

Economic activities may be defined or restricted by ethnicity

Ethnicity may affect livelihoods

- Competition among ethnic groups for access to and ownership of resources

- Restriction to the access of education, medical services, voting power, statelessness (Palestine)
- Restrictions in employment opportunities (blacks in USA are historically poor as a legacy of slavery, so have more restricted access education, less access good jobs results, and much higher unemployment rate than whites)

## **Rituals**

### *Rituals*

social and religious activities based on gatherings of a large number of people

### **How rituals affect livelihoods**

- *Negative impacts:*
  - prevent HH members from working
  - induce HH members to spend their own savings
  - Increased HH expenditures for more food and other HH expenses
  - May lead to social conflict (e.g. among religious groups)
- *Positive impact:*
  - can increase social linkages and strengthen the social ties, feelings (*increase social capital*)

## **Conflicts**

### *Conflicts*

- Disputes between individuals or groups regarding natural, economic and social (gender issues) resources
- Conflicts are based on other social relations: class, beliefs and ethnicity

### **How conflicts affect HH livelihoods?**

- reduce social security
- destroy different resources
- breakdown social linkages, kinship, community feelings
- disruption of market channels
- hamper family and individual life
- increases vulnerability to death, disruption of income, migration (Rohinga, Myanmar)
- causes separation of family members
- reduces access to education, medical services (Bihari refuge in Bangladesh)

### **Conflict mitigation strategies**

- Access of poor to education, credit facilities and natural resources
- Formation of poor farmer's co-operatives for production and marketing
- Rehabilitation of the affected ethnic minority can save their livelihoods
- Ensuring the good governance at local level
- Formulation and implementation of code of conduct to ensure rights
- Training focusing the negative side of rituals and believes
- Motivating the local elites

### **Summary**

- Different social dimensions affect livelihood
- Empowerment of disadvantaged groups, policies and laws can mitigate these social sources of discrimination and conflict.